

Bullying In Schools Legislation Testimony, Friday, March 11, 2011

Today we come together to change school climate legislation with regard to policies that govern bullying. The first question I asked myself when I saw the email proposing S.B. 1138 was, "Why did this take so long?"

For the past 7 years, I have been personally involved in working with the two Naugatuck Superintendents to change bullying policies in our school system. I have worked tirelessly to ensure that each of the then 11 schools instituted "bully busters" type education to the children, as well as the teachers. BUT much to my disappointment, time away from the classroom to attend anti-bullying workshops became a financial issue for school administrators, so the training that the teachers so desperately needed fell by the wayside. The passing of S.B. 1138 will never allow that to happen again.

7 years ago, in 5th grade, my son was beaten on for protecting a mentally challenged child while in school. He was subsequently taunted unmercifully for his entire 5th grade year. He not only sustained a broken growth plate in his left foot, but watched as the children who bullied him came to our home and stoned our family dogs.

I remember holding him in my arms and promising him that I'd fight for his RIGHT to be safe in a place where no child should ever have to face what he endured...BUT, much to my disappointment, school administrators simply claimed that their hands were "tied" with how much that they could do LEGALLY...and protecting my child on the school bus and in the lunchroom became a daily chore for me. The passing of S.B. 1138 will ensure that our administrators have policy that can be enforced and give them the legal right to take "it" to the next level.

We must begin this level of education at a very early age, where rules are learned and ramifications for inappropriate actions are clearly defined and with the passing of S.B. 1138, FINALLY enforced.

22 months ago, while playing frisbee in P.E. class, my son was once again targeted. He was purposely and violently assaulted, suffering a horrible concussion.

The student doing the bullying had been recently removed from a tech school for anger management issues and dropped into the public school system. But because his "track" record from his previous school was ignored, he began his "reign of terror" all over again. My son, a first degree black belt, honor student, and Corps Commander of the high school's JROTC program, has lost countless opportunities for scholarships in this his senior year because of his inability to perform better in class and on his SATS. All of this driven by a BULLY who has had little or no punishment for his actions. My son continues to deal with stress headaches, vision loss, imperfect study patterns driven by the concussion, neck and shoulder pain, and now a "failed" attempt at financing his education. Some fair deal, huh?

6 months later, the child verbally assaulted my son again during the changing of classes, and because it was caught on tape, his actions finally resulted in a suspension.

But, because it was NOT in the same school year, the case was treated as NEW verses ONGOING. The slate was "wiped clean" and the 10 school suspension rule began all over again...never resulting in a much deserved expulsion. The passing of S.B. 1138 will not allow the track records of these "bullies" to be dismissed at the close of each school year, but instead be dealt with accordingly.

As I sit here today, I'm curious as to why we simply don't institute a ZERO TOLERANCE BULLYING POLICY to mirror the one that currently exists for drugs in school. Allow me to provide a synopsis of how this works: If you get caught with drugs in school, you get expelled for the year and a criminal record becomes part of your resume. Simple enough. This great country that we live in sends billions of dollars in aid along with the men and women in our Armed Forces to STOP dictators across the world from "BULLYING" their people. We step in and save humanity because it is simply the right thing to do. Period. No questions asked. No objections tolerated. Yet, in this great Country of ours we cannot stop this "disease" that takes children's lives and causes horrific situations like Columbine and Virginia Tech to look like a troubled student had a bad day. Bullying ultimately caused those students to strike out against others and leave a blemish on our education system that we can never recover from. BUT, S.B. 1138 could be our beginning to enable us to move toward that ZERO TOLERANCE policy that we so desperately need...for our children, our children's children...for the hurtful moments that exist in each one of our minds when we too were growing up...

Today is about simply doing the right thing. My now 18 year old son, currently in counseling to get the "black cloud off his shoulder" from the two bullying incidents that he was subjected to, simply states what needs to be addressed: and I quote, "It's not the kids that bullied me that I'm really angry with, it's the adults that did nothing about it. They did nothing to protect me and put a stop to it".

Today, each one of you has the opportunity to make a change for the better. Today, when you pass S.B. 1138, you will become an unsung hero. And tonight when you place your head upon your pillow, you'll be able to say, "Today was a good day...today, I made a difference in the life of a child".

Kimberlee F. Simko
399 Webb Rd.
Naugatuck, CT. 06770
203-723-5493